

Yanks Offer Martin Executive Position

By MURRAY CHASS

In the ongoing story of George Steinbrenner and Billy Martin, where the bizarre is the routine, there was another development yesterday: the Yankee owner has offered his twice former manager an executive job with the team.

The position is tied to the settlement that Martin's lawyer has reached with Steinbrenner on the last two years of Martin's contract, a source familiar with the situation said. And the settlement is contingent on Martin's acceptance of the job, or possibly his becoming manager of the Oakland A's.

The managerial job with the A's, which several days ago was considered by some a *fait accompli*, appeared to be more off than on.

Martin and Charles O. Finley, the A's owner, were said to be significantly apart on several elements of an agreement, including salary and control of the team. Because Finley needs a manager by the time the A's training camp opens Saturday, there may not be enough time for the differences to be worked out, and Finley may be forced to look elsewhere.

Eddie Sapir, the New Orleans judge who is also Martin's lawyer, said Mon-

day night that "several opportunities" were available to Martin. The only two Martin was considering yesterday, however, were the Steinbrenner and the Finley offers.

The Steinbrenner offer, the source said, was for an undefined job in the front office, perhaps an advisory position. There was no immediate word from Martin's camp on whether he would become a new Yankee executive.

"Billy has an affection for the New York Yankees that can't be denied," Doug Newton, Martin's agent, said, "but it's certainly premature to speculate on the future, whether Billy would or would not consider going with the Yankees at this time."

Less than two years ago, as he turned 50 years of age, Martin expressed the desire that ~~some day~~ he would be invited to take a position in the Yankee front office. But Steinbrenner's offer apparently was not necessarily what Martin had in mind.

The offer was puzzling to observers. In one breath, the owner was saying that he did not owe Martin \$125,000 a year for the next two years because the former manager violated his contract when he punched the marshmallow salesman last October.

In the next breath, though, Steinbrenner seemed to be suggesting that Martin come to work with him in the executive offices, ignoring all the comments he had made about Martin's behavior not having been in the club's best interests.

The Turnabout in 1978

Such a turnabout is not much more inconsistent than Steinbrenner's rapid about-face in 1978, when he eagerly accepted Martin's resignation — which was made before he could dismiss him — and then announced five days later that Martin would be returning as manager in 1980.

Steinbrenner was traveling yesterday and unavailable for comment on his latest idea.

If Martin does not accept the Yankee job and does not become the A's manager, he and Steinbrenner could still wind up in a hearing before Lee MacPhail, the president of the American League, over the \$250,000 for the last two years of Martin's contract. MacPhail said he had not heard anything that would prompt him to cancel the March 6 hearing.

Newton and Sapir spoke with Finley by telephone Monday night, but apparently could not resolve the differences in their negotiations for a contract. Late yesterday afternoon Newton said that neither he nor Sapir had talked with Finley since that call, and that they would not be in a position to talk with him the rest of the day.

The absence of a Finley call could indicate that the owner was looking elsewhere for a manager. Reached at his Chicago insurance office, Finley said that he was considering others, that he had been all along.

What was Martin's status in the managerial search? "I wouldn't say that he's out," Finley said, "but I wouldn't say that he's in, either."